

Distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding HB5580, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PESTICIDE ADVISORY COUNCIL, THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PRIMARY SERVICE AREA TASK FORCE AND THE ELIMINATION OF A MUNICIPAL MANDATE.

I am in support of HB5580, particularly as it pertains to the recommendations of the EMS Task Force. All the recommendations of the Task Force stand to improve the delivery of EMS in Connecticut, but of particular importance is Recommendation #5, the Alternative Provision of PSA Responsibilities.

These days, I find myself to be a man of many hats. I am a sworn member of the West Hartford Fire Department, the Union President of the West Hartford Fire Fighters Association, a taxpayer in Glastonbury, a husband, a father, and a high school soccer coach to name a few.

As a sworn member of the West Hartford Fire Department, I have the regular occasion to see why Recommendation #5 is so important. Operating at the supplemental first responder level, West Hartford fire fighters interface with a private ambulance entity on a variety of life threatening medical emergencies. Unfortunately, this means that I have to bear witness to a myriad of performance issues including but not limited to; slow response times, unprepared ambulance staff, substandard patient care, rampant employee turnover, a lack of compassion, and a general culture of complacency. Under the current system, this below average performance more than meets the minimum standard, and allows the PSA holder to continue their stranglehold on the service without any checks and balances or quality assurance from the municipality. Recommendation #5 puts the provider on notice, knowing that the municipality has a vehicle for change if their performance doesn't maintain the high level of patient care that the taxpayer deserves.

As a Labor leader, this issue all boils down to "standard of care" for me. You may hear some testimony against HB5580, and specifically Recommendation #5, from entities that already hold the PSA's. If the shoe was on the other foot, I would welcome and expect the oversight and quality assurance from the municipality. It's not a good practice to let any service provider in municipal government to become untouchable. When that happens, ultimately it is the service that suffers. In this case, the standard of care has been marginalized.

As a taxpayer in Glastonbury, I expect that the Town would have a vehicle for change, if needed, to choose a provider that will deliver the highest standard of care to its constituents. The needed flexibility exists in all other aspects of public health and public safety for a municipality, why not EMS? My advocacy for the "home rule" that goes along with Recommendation #5, is not a condemnation on all EMS providers currently delivering services, as many are adequately serving municipalities. But what if a municipality isn't satisfied with adequate service, and instead desires superior service that they can get from a different provider. Or maybe a municipality thinks it can create a more efficient allocation of resources, or perhaps even take advantage of a regionalization option. These scenarios would all play out via Recommendation #5.

As a husband, father, and high school soccer coach, it does not provide me with much peace of mind that such a vehicle for change doesn't currently exist. As I head out the door each day to execute my sworn duties as a West Hartford fire fighter, I would hope that if my family or one of my players had the need to dial 911 for a medical emergency that they would be entering into a system that would provide them with the highest standard of care. Recommendation #5 is that vehicle for change.

Respectfully Submitted,

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